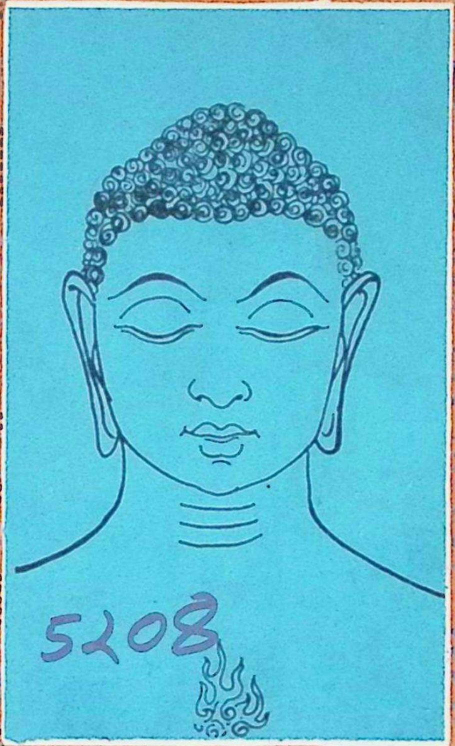
MUNI NATHMAL



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LORD MAHAVIRA

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It is stated that Mahavira was a rebel against killing of life entailed in sacrifices and that he tiraded against casteism and slavery. The argument does not convey much. In my view, what the Lord sought to establish is equability and an extermination of unvirtuousness. Sacrificial violence was caused by the unvirtuous trends and so was casteism. Slavery also had its origin in this malady. The Lord's effort to seek equilibrium resulted in the weeding of these pernicious tendencies. However, it was never the ideal of the Lord, but only the happy bye-product of his efforts.

Lord Mahavira's life was that of a ceaseless ascetic. The book cannot presume to record a comprehensive philosophy and life of that great being, but that which the book ventures to delineate, does touch upon it.

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MUNI NATHMAL

Translated by

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I Say

What Mahavira stood for? is a question that each believer in non-violence is likely to be faced with. It again poses itself before all those who repose their belief in fearlessness, human endeavour and meditation. The book assays to offer a concise answer to the question.

Lord Mahavira's life was that of a ceaseless ascetic. The book cannot presume to record a comprehensive philosophy and life of that great being, but that which the book ventures to delineate, does touch upon it.

The Lord embodied an unfathomable fearlessness, an insuppressible endeavour and a transcendental truth and that makes him non-violent.

He was ever devoted to the cultivation of non-violence and hence he professed, "The truth is mute and that which is mute is true." To the explorer of truth, the Lord's philosophy is an open sesame. To read him is to read your own weal and to accomplish him is to accomplish yourself. To quote Acharya Tulsi, "To present Lord Mahavira in this inaustere age is to revive austerity."

I conclude with the hope that the essays will offer inspiration to the readers.

Anuvrat Nagar
Motibagh, Raipur

Muni Nathmal

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MAHAVIRA :
THE SYMBOL OF NON-VIOLENCE

The cycle of aeons is beginningless and endless. Each of these periods are jettisoned of something extant and is rewarded with something novel. The pioneers are the hearkeners of the novel. They present in their conduct the unprecedented gifts. Else, why would a pioneer be incarnated at all? His arrival epitomises the novel, his deed materialises it and his contribution perpetuates it. He leaves it to posterity to evaluate his contribution, when he is gone.

It is the marvel of marvels that man bound by time and space should be able to express the transcendental. History is rich with such great souls, their character and their ideas. It is the very physical being of man that is sparked ablaze with greatness: it is the lofty thought, noble sentiments and cosmic principles that render it so. The follower dedicates his mind and heart to such a being in his sublime thoughts and deeds.

Acharya Samantbhadra recognises the eminence of Lord Mahavira (and others of his category) not because the gods paid visitations to him, nor because like divine beings, he was blessed with the godlike appurtenances of Chhatra and Chamar, but because he subscribed to truth and stayed immune of the dichotomy between the word and the deed. Apparent signs of divinity have been devised by occultists. A *yogi* is seen to perform miraculous deeds by virtue of such powers. Such phenomena are far from convincing about one's inherent greatness. Admirers have fain ascribed their heroes with such occurrences.

A faith in the inherent truth cannot thus be externally imposed. Here lies the infallible test of a soul's greatness. Acharya Hemchandra distinguishes Lord Mahavira with this unrivalled virtue of inherent distinction. To quote him, "Lord! The seers may not concede the god Indra's prostration before you. They may accredit their sacred lawgivers with this distinction. But, the self-evident truth of your preachings can never be concealed nor can it be overlooked.

It is a little over twenty and five centuries since Prince Vardhaman was born. He was a householder. At the age of thirty he became an ascetic. Then he emerged as a transcendental lawgiver. His preachings began to offer inspiration to human beings. His ceaseless austerities began to emit their refulgence. It occurred to men that his inviolable muteness stands for practising before preaching. He embraced the principle of a non-violent conduct. He stood for the awakening of soul. The society, the state and the nation experienced a rejuvenation. Above all, the individuals experienced such a nascent phenomenon. He refused to subscribe to the prejudices of the society, state and nation. He would subscribe to the ultimate truth and nothing short of it. He epitomised non-violence. He repudiated the bournes of castes, creeds, climes and preconceived dogma. He was engrossed with the question of violence tete-a-tete non-violence.

His deeds emanate from the faith that violence is self-alienation and non-violence is supreme phase of self-realisation or *Samadhi.* His life embodies this truth that renders all extraneous testimonies of his faith redundant. He chose to launch upon a course of severe austerities. Again, it was he himself who repudiated the improper varieties of austerities. His austerities of the most trying kind lasted for as long as twelve and a half year. His disciples also performed austerities by abstaining from rich and ample diet.

The epicurean world shunned austere living. Again, it was he who himself condemned the penances undertaken with a mundane end in view. He detected the germ of vanity in penances meant for deluding the people around. Penances that are *Tamasika* or of a dark origin always invoked his wrath.

The physical frame bent into submission conduces to violence if the feelings of the subject is kinked into agony for himself or for others. Austerities that cause injury to others and provoke self-pity are austerities in name. A close observation will reveal the inherent violence. He chose to treat his path alone and also admitted into his fold like a Tirthankar[1] subscribers to his faith. Thousands of Mahavratis who practised major observances followed him and millions of Anuvratis who practised minor observances did so. Non-violence is his supreme achievement. The Mahavratis practised non-violence inexceptionably and the Anuvratis opted for the track of minor observances and both were welcomed to the fold and granted the degree of discipline to the extent they could practise non-violence.

He stayed close-lipped and he did speak: stayed close-lipped so long as he was engaged, segregated, the path of his practices, with enlightenment still in the offing, and came out with utterances when he accomplished the supreme bliss of Kaivalya[2]. His violence was aimed at investing the soul with non-violence in its totality. Why utter one word that falls short of the absolute truth? He spoke to bring home to man the supreme principle of non-violence for it to practise.

He was an explorer of knowledge and still he regarded sophistry as an impediment in deliverance.

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[1] Creator of organisation.

[2] Supreme enlightenment indicative of liberation.

Knowledge foreruns all action. A knowledgeable person alone can master his self. A needle with thread is redeemed even if it is dropped, so a knowledgeable person is redeemable even after a fall. He does not miss the track of his pursuit. A knowledge unillumined with spiritualism is futile. It does not elevate us. A multiplicity of tongues is bewildering. A mere accumulation of knowledge is not auxiliary in delivering us. Unless the conduct is rectified accordingly, the subject is oppressing himself with accumulation of knowledge. Renunciation alone awards moral insight to our conduct. The true test of knowledge is the translation of it in actual conduct. One without such a conduct is deluded with an affectation of knowledge.

The Lord believed in resolving as well as in showing new directions. He reconciled the knowledge and the action. Neither can lead to deliverance unsupported by the other. He razed the distinctions prevailing between the entities of time, nature, destiny, free will and fatalism. He revealed the apparent contradiction of the lasting and the transient, the expressible and the inexpressible the true and the false to be nothing but looking at the reality from two different angles. He thus shattered the backbone of all contradictions. In a word, he favoured the theory of non-absolutism and totally rejected absolutism. Besides, he established implicit faith and righteous vision. To him an insistence on truth is the launching pad for all spiritual progress. That being wanting, imperturbability and *veetaragatva* is a far cry. From another angle, his life, in its multifaceted aspects, reflects nothing but non-violence. Whatever he did was for its sake and whatever he abstained from doing was, again, for its sake. His conduct was grounded in non-violence, his thought in non-absolutism and his language in the relative approach. Non-violence comprehends all these. Non-absolutic vision enlivened his intellectual and mental concept of non-violence and Syadavada [Jain theory of relativity] enlivened his expression of it. He was a great cherisher of the universality of spirit. He refused to accept the distinctions between the souls as appearing in individual persons. The phases of spiritual evolution still cannot cloud the basic community of souls. He asserted, "The six kinds of creatures are no different from one another. No life merits destruction. Unavoidable violence is violence all the same. It is a moral lapse to commit it. It cannot become non-violence."

He never subscribed to the metaphysical concept of non-dualism. His concept differed from the one that one Absolute was partaken of by different creatures, justifying a non-discrimination amongst all creatures. Lord Mahavira's principle of non-discrimination finds its expression in an apparently non-dualistic (but distinguishable from the traditional ideology of that name) assertion—"The one which you seek to destroy is the same as you are." Evolution and natural existence variegate the souls and still no dividing line can be drawn between one being and another. This revolutionary spiritual universality sets all distinctions to naught. When bodily differences do not count, where would the so-called distinctions of class, caste and creed stand?

An utter dispassionateness signified the Lord's philosophy. An equanimity drawing sustenance from violence subsists so long as there obtains an equitable distribution of means of life. The moment the situation is thrown out of balance, a wild disorder comes into being. In the real equilibrium of the non-violent kind, the availability or otherwise of the material things ceases to condition life. In such an ideal state, the soul is neither exhilarated in gain nor exasperated in loss. The violence-oriented pseudo-equilibrium is matter-ordained and the real one spirit-ordained. In the equilibrium well-grounded in spiritualism, the diverse conditions of prosperity-adversity; pleasure-pain, life-death, condemnation-commendation and honour-insult cease to ruffle the subject and his imperturbable non-violence. Class distinctions thrive on acquisition. It finds no place in the non-violent cast of such a being. A non-acquisitive being is not destitute under compulsion. Such a one is non-acquisitive when property is abundantly available to him. He alone is commendable who can forego, willingly, the objects that are available to him in natural course.

The Lord's faith in equal existence of consciousness in all living beings and equability of souls discarded all caste and touchability distinctions. An exultation in one's high status invariably brings callousness into play. A feeling of hatred ligates the subject with a series of attachments. Hatred stretches the interminable chain of delusions. A class distinction based not on functional distinctions but on bio-racial considerations is a myth. Such arbitrary categories, when accepted as perennial ones, result in utter ignorance. One who deems oneself nobler than the other labours under a misconception, and is far from being noble. An individual endowed with virtues alone qualifies for the label of nobility.

An individual fails to realise his freedom of will, inhering in him, if he surrenders himself to an unknown power like a puppet. It results in his losing his independent vision. Such beings also choose to be deprived of the vision of others, who might be available to them. Such obtuseness creates a feeling of inferiority. Thus originate class consciousness and similar distinctions. It was Lord Mahavira who diagnosed the root cause of the malady. He hit the nail on its head. He propounded the theory of self-creation (*Atma-Kartriva*) and the freedom of oneself.

Theism led man to project his own deeds upon God. Man slumbered into indolence by offering the keys of happiness, unhappiness, heaven and hell to that Being. Lord Mahavira chose to explode this inertia. "The subject himself creates happiness or otherwise for himself. It is he who brings heaven and hell for himself. Our deeds fructify in suitable moral desert. It is the subject who performs and brings about the deeds with their moral hallow, independent of any extraneous force. An action needs must have a reaction and suitably modify the doer."

The Lord was endowed with a profound vision and sustained meditation and spiritual pursuit. His philosophy is a marvel of lucid exposition. Similarly, his Yogic system offers the quietude and the beaming essence of higher living. The very mode of his life was Yoga. Each of his deeds reconciled itself with the motto of salvation. He succeeded in unravelling the mystery of existence by the dint of his own experience. Human beings long for freedom, happiness, peace and supreme bliss. They crave to befriend people. And still they are far from knowing and farther from winning a happy company, beatitudinous tranquillity and tranquillising happiness.

It is too common a belief that a fulfilment of sense-cravings leads to happiness and that we receive happiness by giving it. The Lord preached, "The sense indulgences sparking off into momentary pleasures create a semblance of satisfaction. It is the way to lasting unhappiness. It is the surest device to suffer an unquenchable itch for further sense indulgence. The real happiness lies in spiritual activity. It alone is capable of offering a lasting happiness. It is not going to result in affliction and does not cause the satisfaction-tipped essential dissatisfaction."

The soul discovers its fulfilment in itself, and not in that which is nonself. The self alone can resolve itself. A projection of the self upon the nonself or a confusion of the two would fail to resolve the situation. The path of *samadhi* or utter self-absorption entails retention of the self to its legitimate arena; the self be not attached and bound the non-self.

His views on human amiability embody a profound wisdom. Our friends do not exist without. The duality of selfishness and love can, at best, create a formal friendship, the essence of true well-wishing wanting. No individual's good is inextricably welded to that of another. To be able to offer a selfless love to an individual is an impossibility. A perfect freedom can exist only when self-interest and love conclusively overlap. The glorific utterance of Lord Mahavira throws its spell on man—"It is thou who be thine own friend, Man! Wherefore thou seekest a friend without?" A friend in need is a friend indeed. The Lord directed, "Conquer thyself by self-restraint to deliver thyself of all affliction."

So did the Lord conduct himself in life, that one is inspired with magnanimity of thought and equanimity of feeling. He never set store by hero-worship. Birth does not confer any greatness. He declared monkhood to be non-hereditary. Each creature is eligible to evolve himself. The females are as much entitled to spiritual pursuit as their male counterparts. Equivalent to the male monkhood, he created the one for the female nuns. He layed the order of severe and still warmly evocative discipline. Unless a disciple doggedly plods along a stern and inexceptionable path, he is always subject to a lapse. He chose for himself and his disciples a conduct bereft of all softness.

He addressed himself to the masses in the dialect of the latter, which endeared him to them. He permitted the monks to live in villages or jungles or both. He declared the monks and the householders equally fit for spiritual pursuit. To study the Himalayan loftiness of his life is to be elevated to the sublime heights and to simultaneously bow inwardly into a reverent submission.

MAHAVIRA : THE MEDITATIVE GENIUS

The prime attribute of Lord Mahavira is his ceaseless austerities. Masses view him as the great cherisher of moral pursuit. It was at Navanalanda where Acharya Tulsi was amidst a few professors, one of whom expressed himself thus, "Jainism is a rigorist religion, Sir. To be a monk, to resort to fasting and to purge the flesh! I shudder at the thought."

The questioner's demeanour reflected no affectation. It was a piece of sincere utterance. It is not a solitary observation: thousands of his kind think in these lines. The present succeeds the past and the latter is inferred from the former. Today, the Jains excel over others in austerities—austerities in all their miraculous severity. Common man is more aware of this aspect of Jainism and hence rightly believes Jainism to be a stern path of rigorous practices.

The changing wheel of time converts the salient features of a thing into secondary ones and vice-versa. The Lord explained the fasting and dieting as the gross austerities and the meditation as the subtle one. In course of time, meditation was thrown into the background by being dubbed as the gross one and fasting as the subtle one. He alone is supposed to be a robust aspirant of austerities who can sustainedly fast, rather than meditate.

The Lord blended in his practices, the meditation and the fasting, both. He abstained from mere fastings without a suitable accompaniment of meditations. During a span of twelve years and thirteen fortnights of meditation, he subsisted upon a mere forty eight minute's sleep. The rest of the period was devoted to meditation, in large measure. A period of sixteen days and as many nights was spent in an unbroken meditation. In his praise has been remarked, "He has practised unprecedented depths of concentration. His meditation can be symbolised by the fairness of the moon and the conch-shell." The sublimation of the soul calls for meditation more than fasting. The Lord attained its highest intensity and he awoke to the supreme realization of Kaivalya.

The Lord purged the physical frame with the severest penances, but he never granted these the status occupied by meditation. He equated, for the sake of simplicity the distinguished meditation of seven breathing periods with two days of fasting. To launch upon fasts is always easier. The body may feel the discomfort of it on being denied the nourishment. Those undergoing it may find it difficult to concentrate.

The Lord did not value meditation, neither, as the supremely efficacious practice. Fasting cannot be denied its own value in the regimen. To a Jain, meditation is something more than a curb on ideation. It implies a suppression of the mental urges and the body-processes as well.

These urge-processes are complex in nature and owe their origin to multiple mental planes as well as the physical and lingual ones.

The mind and the speech function through the instrumentality of the bodily frame. A placid body easily pacifies the lingual and the ideational faculties. A restive body is a major obstacle in the attainment of tranquillity. It follows that through the process of arresting this restiveness of the body, the mind can win serenity. There is no such end in view as that of afflicting the flesh. The body is only harnessed to spiral to higher planes. Lord Buddha ascribed all sins to human minds, exclusively. It is given to Lord Mahavira to discover an equal contribution of the body. Lord Buddha emphasised meditation : Lord Mahavira emphasised meditation and fasting, both.

Harnessing the body to spiritual ends was a unique device. The Lord would not prescribe it for all and sundry. He did not believe in indiscriminate masochism. It is for the aspirant to discover specific course of austerities for himself. The end is to be ridden of the material bondage. The world is the outcome of the unholy alliance between the self and the mundane. Emancipation is nothing but cutting this Gordian knot.

We may not be able to divorce the mundane that easily; a graduated course alone accomplishes it. Fasting happens to be a link in that chain. Jain scriptures preach us to look to the capacity and the circumstances, the intensity of the faith and the health of the subject, the country and the clime before launching upon a course.

Discomfort can be either natural or invited. The Lord exhorted us to be indifferent to the natural calamities and thus win the rewards of stoicism. This maxim is one of great value to an aspirant. This resistance wanting, the aspirant is disconcerted at the least discomfort. It is far from suggesting here that discomforts should be voluntarily invited. Jainism is not difficult to practise on account of fasting and similar exercises. Its difficulty lies in its emphasis on non-violence. Basically, non-violence and meditation have much in common. Non-violence is concentration into the self. Meditation is hardly different from it. The process of self-purification in the system of Lord Buddha consists of meditation, as is commonly believed and in the system of Lord Mahavira, non-violence. Rightly says the Acharya, "To ascertain the self is righteous perception, to know it thus is righteous knowledge and to be grounded in it is righteous action."

There is hardly conceivable any Yoga besides this. To proceed with the self, to exist in it and to conclude with it is meditation as well as non-violence. It is through this system of meditation that the Lord realised himself, to achieve the summum bonum. His followers require to know this fact and to know the supreme worth of meditation, as they do of fasting. They have to demonstrate that Jainism combines the two practices in an acceptable form.

MAHAVIRA :
THE SPIRITUAL SOVEREIGN

Mahavira the Rajput prince chose to become an ascetic. He launched upon a course of the severest austerities. He submitted himself to the Everests of discomforts for as long as twelve years and thirteen fortnights. He did with less than an hour's sleep during this span. The ascetic Mahavira emerged from these religious austerities of fasting, meditation and concentration as Lord Mahavira. The supreme realisation emitted the glory all around. An aspirant in the austerities, at last became the Tirthankar or the creator of tirthas or shrines. Four tirthas came into being—the monks, the nuns, the householder male aspirants and the householder female aspirants. Masses clamoured in to have ablution in the confluence of the three streams of righteous knowledge, righteous philosophy and righteous conduct. The acknowledged disciples of the Lord could stoically suffer the darts of austerities. Lord Buddha had ordained the path of the Golden mean. The ideas of austerities and prolonged journeys on foot was rampant then. Lord Mahavira ordained and alternative to both these concepts. He neither relaxed the discipline, nor did he prescribe like a martinet fivefold austerities before fires. Deliverance is meant for the self. It is riveted to the physical frame. This bondage is to be riven. The tyranny of the physical is to be shattered. It is to be so disposed of that no more can it enslave us. To vanquish the physical we pass it through the course of austerities. The practices need not cause discomfort to others. In case it be so the practice is not authentic. Such practice is, in fact, suicidal to the aspirant.

A laxity in norms would result in the disintegration of the institution and the resultant confusion to the aspirants. The singular austerities of the Lord awarded us nonviolence and his ordaining the tirthas or the four categories of aspirants awarded us the norms. These are the two aspects of his evenly austere conduct.

Non-violence invariably occurs to us on remembering the name of the Lord. The other aspect happens to be less known. In his system, a rigorous discipline is a prerequisite of non-violence. Non-violence implies a conduct so regulated. The selfish drives in man needs must be subordinated to a rigid discipline. To what avail rigorism for one already benevolent? His self conducts him along an ideal course, of its own accord. So long as this inborn sanction is not won, the aspirant does not become a true aspirant. Such are the ordeals for the aspirant and such is his goal. How far is it practicable? Interminably tiresome is the course and also fraught with grave risks of a lapse. It is the discipline that protects one along this path, provided it be voluntarily embraced.

The Lord ordained, "Pursuit is within one's competence in habitation and in wilderness, in isolation and in company of similar aspirants." It had been prescribed that one who has comprehended certain Purvas (Shastras) can live along during these practices. Others may not do so. Such a one becomes a canon himself. Scriptures cease to command him. He is entitled to dictate himself. However, unto this last, the aspirant needs must seek guidance and abide by it, as the scriptures provide. He has no option to deviate from the scriptural norms. Until one has won the supreme realisation, one falls short of the authority to vary the norms given in the scriptures.

The rationality, the logic and the arguments do have a claim on our intellect. But an aspirant should, in all cases, subscribe to the norms. A conduct implicitly modelled on his vows is the compass of a monk. His morals be untainted and proclivities be towards righteousness, ever and anon.

Where the Lord exhorted the aspirant to be free of all prejudices or a priori notions, he also directed the latter to be unwaiveringly grounded in his truthful vows.

The prime disciple of the Lord, Gautam would make queries and the Lord would reply. In amazement, Gautam enquired, "Is it so my Lord?"

"It is so Gautam."

"In case of perplexities on religious dogma, should a disciple accept as final the dictates of the master who is purged of all attachments?"

Said the Lord, "It ought to be verily so."

The dialogue may not come home to the rationalist. However, it stays valid for a spiritualist as one of grave import. The recent spiritual experiments undertaken by Khuda Bakhsh in the U.S.A. may signify something to the scientist. They are of little worth in Yoga. Sheer rationalism loses much of its relevance in the context of spiritualism and Yoga.

One who is blessed with an implicit faith alone qualifies to head a sect. An indefinite fast terminating with mortality is permitted to such a being. One with such devotion is endowed with supreme confidence and supreme concentration. So long as the faith is non-profound and the concentration vacillating, the spiritual attainments erode as fast as they are earned. Faith is the fount of power and concentration its storehouse. An enhancement of faith and resolute single-mindedness open up the portals of human evolution. From this plane does an aspirant succeed in discovering novel vistas for himself.

The discipline that breeds a feeling of vassalage is no discipline. Disciplehood is an index of the soul's solemnity. It is the reverse of insignificance. No attainment is more valuable to a disciple than that of mastering his senses and his mind. A discipline that inclines to the belittling of the disciple is coercive. It can do more harm than good.

Looking to the new milieu, the reformists call for altered codes for the monks. The demand is not unwarranted, but the task is far from being easy. Who will decide, thus far and no farther? Who will undertake the uniformity in the changed set of circumstances? It leads to a chaos. The unwaiveringness of faith that obtains in the traditional atmosphere ceases to be so in an altered one. Once the inertia of change gains momentum, the trend of changing the minor aspects plagues the major ones also. The very root is exposed to the resulting onslaught. Hence venture not to violate the norms lightly, howsoever minor they may appear to be.

The hidden sanction in the vigilant eyes around does help in shaping our overt conduct. When we are alone, we may be able to violate the norm. It is different with the internal norms. The company or the isolation cease to be material then. The internal conduct is beyond apprehension from any quarter. There the sanction stays with the scriptures only and no other, except the master. The disciple embraces it for his own good. He himself vigilantly watches his own conduct. Thus he is homodisciplined and not heterodisciplined.

Be not afraid of the individuals and the scriptures but of the impending doom. The scoffer of the norms, the propounder of the obviously false are destined to a ceaseless wandering along the vast incarnations. Make yourself the final sanction.

The individual may exercise his discretion in respect of choosing his repository of reverence and obedience. But the individual has to possess the capacity to submit to the discipline in utter modesty and dedicate the genuine respect and regard. Submission of the heartfelt kind breeds a spontaneous reverence. Reverence is that which is spontaneous and no other.

The Lord preached to his followers: "Meet the evil submissively. A wise man reads his own good in it: a fool is merely enraged by it." The code of conduct contained in the *Acharang Dashvaikalika* (Ch. 1) elaborates the dictum adequately. To put it succinctly, the Lord sums up his path in humility. Humility implies righteous conduct and discipline. A submissive man is likely to be humble. Humility, in its turn, breeds submission, and the latter righteousness. The Lord founded the spiritual pursuit in ethical conduct and the latter in volitional discipline and thus ordained the homogeneity of the religion as to make it potent and dependable.

MAHAVIRA : THE GLORIOUS

Lord Mahavira was the noble apostle of self-realisation. To him realisation of self was the realisation of truth. He alone is entitled to preach truth who has himself realised the same, first. The Lord discovered the innumerable facets of truth. Much of what he discovered is still ineffable. We remain ignorant of some of the truths enunciated by the Lord. The revealed is more amenable to human inquisitiveness than the unrevealed. We celebrate only the known attributes of the Lord such as his preaching of truth, non-violence etc. and the refutation of casteism, sacrificial rites and the violence attending thereupon. However, the Lord's life exemplifies many more of such eternal verities that are still obscure. We do not stay completely unaware of these verities and still they are not fully known to us. Such ones are more elusive than the ones we stay completely ignorant of.

The soul is different from the body and it is no different from God. We all seem to be aware of this truth. And still these verities elude us so long as we have not verified ourselves. Lord Mahavira exhorted the disciples to purge themselves of vanity and see that they readily grasp the truth. So long as we suffer from vanity, we cannot do so.

Notwithstanding man's awareness of the concommittance of unhappiness with desire, man falls into the trap of desire while attempting to be relieved of unhappiness. Hatred can only breed hatred. And still man augments hatred in full awareness. He knows that arms aggravate violence and still he resorts to manufacturing the arms in his attempt for establishing peace. The Lord revealed, "He alone will vanquish desire, who knows its true nature as well as the device to vanquish it. He alone will vanquish temptation to wield weapons, who knows its true nature as well as the device to vanquish it." The knowledge would not be conceded to be true, by the Lord, unless it facilitates the avoidance of that which is undesirable. His wisdom converges into the self. So does his philosophy, and ethics. To him Dharma is nothing if not self-ordained. The entire preachings of him pertain to self and its phases. That automatically draws his disciples to him with a gusto, spiritual inquisitiveness and keenness to realise the self in pursuance of the Lord.

NON-VIOLENCE AND DHARMA

The Lord succeeded the tradition of Shramanas or the creators of moral order. His initiation was beyond the compass of the canons. Lord Rishabha had founded the religion as such. The twentytwo tirthankaras that intervened interpreted the four-dimensional ethics. Lord Mahavira revived the five-dimensional ethics. The explanation offered is that the saints initiated by the first tirthankara were in need of a greater enlightenment and hence a differentiation of moral code into the elaborate five dimensions. Abstinence and nonacquisition were separately treated. The succeeding twenty-two tirthankaras found their saints to be better equipped and an-enunciation of ethics on the basis of four dimensions sufficed. Abstinence and non-acquisition were found to be implicit in refraining from indulgence in that which is extraneous. The disciples of Lord Mahavira have been called 'Vakra jada' and the Lord had to revert to the elaborate system of Lord Rishabha. The argument does hold water but it is not comprehensible why to base the difference in system entirely on it.

It is a subject that admits of much excogitation. The community of the treatment of non-violence by all the tirthankaras is conspicuously absent in case of the other four ethical dictates *viz.* truth; non-thieving, continence and non-acquisition.

How can it be explained? Either they found non-violence to be so comprehensive as to include all other ethical obligations or there might have been some other ground for such an attitude. No categorical opinion is possible. Morally approved conduct is the forte of Jainism. It has, more or less, opened new vistas of ethics. All human activities are explicable on the exclusive moral plane. That seems to justify non-violence as the common denominator of ethics as propounded by the tirthankaras. Thus it is permissible to equate Jainism with non-violence.

NON-VIOLENCE AND TRUTH

There is a school of thought that holds that Jainism has failed to emphasise truth to the extent it has done non-violence. We would not brush aside the argument as it happens to be the view of a considerable body of persons. We, however, can meet it with an adequate reply. The Lord would not distinguish between truth and non-violence. Non-violence depicts the full blooming of human spirit when it is indistinguishable from the Absolute. Where does the distinction between the two lie? Where there is truth, there is non-violence, and where the one is absent the other is also absent. Truth survives in the environment where non-violence prevails and the latter stays concomitant with the former. The two interpenetrate so inextricably that a distinction is impossible.

JAINISM AND TRUTH

Hoary traditions do not guarantee the worth of a system. Nor is the converse true. We do not subscribe to the notion that since Jainism is ancient, it ought to be accepted as good. Albeit, one has to admit that the religion is so hoary that it transcends all recorded history. History, however, does record in its compass Lord Mahavira and Lord Parswanath. Of course, Lord Aristanemi and his predecessors are beyond its ken, by far.

Truth is the primordial virtue of human soul. Jainism failed to compete with other religions in number of followers and still its magnitude is, veritably, breathtaking, thanks to its matchless and dauntless treatment of truth.

AN EXCOGITATION ON TRUTH AND ITS NATURE

What is truth? has been the subject of speculation since times immemorial. That which exists is true. But this alone is not true since change is undeniably there. The change does not constitute the non-true. The change is also true in its own right. The change takes place on some substratum.

That which is apparent is true. But, again, that which is not apparent is also true. Truth has many facets. Each of the facets retains truth so long as it retains its existence as one of the facets. It ceases to be true if it divorces itself of the other facets. Truth is no creation of a prophet. It is spontaneous and self-generated. A prophet only delivers it from the latent state to the patent state. The Lord said, "Truth is that which is so revealed by one who is freed of all attachments."

Truth is one and indivisible. That which is lasting and extant is true. This is an objective view. The world contains, both, the animate and the inanimate. That renders the animate and the inanimate, both, true. Man is endowed with consciousness and the capacity to perceive truth. But he still fails to experience the quintessential consciousness, the reason being the obstructing attachments and aversions, that deprive him of the immediacy of it. A man bound by attachments views things with an eye coloured by desire and that conceals truth from him. A man harbouring antipathy, scares the truth away. Truth is revealed to him alone who views it objectively. He alone is blessed with it whose vision is uncoloured with attachment and antipathy.

THE TWO FACES OF REALISM AND SPIRITUAL PRAGMATISM

Lord Mahavira was truly detached. Truth was accessible to him in its fullest comprehension. His revelation is no hearsay. This makes his preachings authentic and a perennial invocation to man to realise his self. That which is true is not useless even if some of its aspects are more useful than others. We exist in a changing world and we cannot afford to stay as mere static realists. We have to be pragmatists as well. Truth does not emerge in a realist's vision only. Truth is as much an achievement of the real.

The view that soul exists and contains, as it were, in a nutshell the cosmic soul is a realistic attitude. The aspiration of the self to attain the Absolute warrants a pragmatic approach. As a realist the Lord stressed, "The self is true. The non-self is also true." As a pragmatist he said, "Self alone is true. All else is false."

The former attitude admits of dualism. The latter is an expression of non-dualism. The Lord exhorted us to view one indivisible truth from innumerable angles. From a relative stance, the non-dual was as much acceptable to him as the dual. From a specific stance, the dual was as much nonacceptable to him as the non-dual. To him the non-dual and the dual were the two faces of the coin of truth.

REALISTIC ATTITUDE

The cosmos knows no beginning and no end. Its content is strictly conserved, neither increasing by an iota nor diminishing. Whatever appears as a change in mass is a mere appearance, and an evidence of change. It is from this vantage that the beginning and the end is conceivable.

The cosmos is perennial. The essential elements of it were never created. There never was a creator of the universe, there is none and none there will be. The substances are the creators of their own moulds of existence. Some forms of existence seem to emerge from a catalysis of mundane element with the particular soul. Such impinging of created appearance on cosmos denies the cosmos of its perennial characteristic. While the conservation of the basic matrix reveals the changelessness, the adhoc changes deny it to be so.

The cosmos is essentially multiple. It includes the animate and the inanimate. The animate are numberless, individually. The inanimate are of five kinds—*dharma*, *adharma*, space, time and non-self. The first four are not distinguishable into individualities. The non-self is individually numberless. As far as their existence is concerned, the substances are all one and the cosmos is also one whole.

THE SPIRITUAL PRAGMATISM

1. *Atma* or Soul.
2. *Parmatma* or Absolute.

The soul exists. It is eligible to become the Absolute by its efforts. This is spiritual pragmatism. The Lord admitted the existence of bondage and the deliverance therefrom. The dispositions that widen the gap between the soul and the Absolute are the bondage. The proclivities that pave the gap are called deliverance. Unrighteous vision, unrighteous knowledge and unrighteous conduct fetter the soul. Righteous vision, righteous knowledge and righteous conduct deliver the soul to elevate to the Absolute.

The *Parmatma* or the Absolute is the perfectly true, the *atma* or soul being imperfectly so. Unto the attainment of its fullest evolution, the soul retains its imperfection. The moment the soul attains this state, it becomes perfect. Hence the perfect truthfulness of the Absolute and the imperfect one of the soul. The soul is the Absolute in germ: the Absolute being the consummation of the former. The germinal and the fructifying stages are virtually inseparable and retain their essential identity. The soul and the Absolute are the two phases of evolution of the one entity and the Absolute other than the final product of the soul's evolution and the soul other than this Absolute, prior to this evolution are inconceivable. The essential identity of the two has been propounded by the Lord in so many words, "That which is soul is God, and that which is God is soul."

The Lord explains the evolutionary aspect in his utterance, "The unevolved and the imperfect form of the conscious is soul and the evolved and the perfect, God. These are the two phases of the conscious being."

SPIRITUALISM AND RELIGION

Lord Mahavira established the true identity between the soul and God. It led to other revelations:

1. Freedom of will of the soul.
2. Moral desert of the soul.

Spiritual effort and individual pursuit are the inevitable corollaries of these truths. These led the Lord to deliver the religion of formalism and ritualism. To borrow his words, religion is the process of rendering the soul into God. Sects, sartorial norms and the rites can, at best, be the adjuncts of a religion, not the religion itself.

Religion is a situation of the soul striving to become God. It is the state of primal purity. The Lord lays down, "*Dharma* resides in the pure soul." What he meant is that *dharma* is no other than the purity of soul. The soul contaminated with the sense-objects is impure, the one intact of these being pure. This purity is nothing but *dharma.*

SECTS AND RELIGION

Lord Mahavira established the tirtha or organisation. He organised the collective cultivation of spiritual pursuits. He, however, vividly distinguished the religion from the sect. He asserted, "One may renounce the sect and not the religion. Another may renounce the religion and still continue in the sect. A third may renounce both. There may be still another who renounces neither."

A sect may conduce to religious achievements. Keeping this in mind, he emphasised the organised sect. He, however, refused to envelope religion with the slime of the sect. He declared those philosophers to be off the track who hearkened people to enter their fold exclusively to win salvation. The other kind who run down their sect are equally doomed. The dharma can be practised by a cultivation of truth and by freeing oneself of the sectarian considerations. Sect is an implement to effect a cooperation and coordination in life. It can, at best, induce an individual to cultivativate dharma, but, in itself, it is not dharma··· To an aspirant, who knows how to discern the one from the other, the sect is an impulsion to dharma and not a conveyance to it.

INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE GROUP

Lord Mahavira was a tirthankara. He was a great pioneer of the collective spiritual pursuit. From another angle, he was a great individualist. His words are: "The self is essentially alone. It is complete in itself. It alone is sentient and is endowed with the capacity to experience consciousness."

A collective group inheres in and implies mutuality. Mutuality and cooperation breed strength. A group exercises this strength, severally. The Lord said, "An individual may commit act of sin for others; the evil desert he suffers alone."

It conveys that while committing acts implying moral judgment, the individual has to view things as independent individual, while he may seek strength from group at other occasions. Groupism can induce atheism also if the individual chooses to follow the group blindly and ignore the moral obligations. This ethical obtuseness is another name for atheism and a negation of one's own self. In the domain of ultimate values, an individual is alone, while in the context of the mundane ones, his existence is collective. No living being can afford to be either segregated or collective, exclusively. The spiritual course culminates in emancipating the individual of the external world and facilitating his existence as an individual pure and simple.

INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE AND THE SPIRITUAL

Lord Mahavira was a believer in the self. His word celebrates the perfection of the soul. Its existence is independent of all and self-reliant. An awareness of this independent existence of the self is spiritualism par excellence. An individual empties himself of the core of real life to the extent he submits to the validity of external environment and gets suffused with the non-real. The vacuity is the germ of materialism. Sublimation is not attained by ingesting the external into the self but by jettisoning that which has been absorbed. Imperfection is no attribute of our quintessence; it is the acceptance of the alien which causes the imperfection. By rejecting it we succeed in realising perfection. It was in this context that the Lord pronounced the soul to be the author of its bliss and otherwise. The soul is its own friend as well as its foe. One who knows it, knows the way of getting emancipated of the tyranny of circumstances. One who is self-contented, grows independent of this maze. Looking inwardly, the supreme freedom from the bondage of senses and the sensate mind is spiritualism. Looking outwardly, the emancipation from the bondage of circumstances is spiritualism. The self seeks naught from the circumstances, and from things external. Thus its entity is an exclusive one. Since its entity is exclusive, so is its span.

SELF-DEPENDENCE

Spiritual pursuit and self-dependence go hand in hand. The more the attachment the more the dependence; the more the dependence the more the despondence. Spiritual cultivation caters to self-dependence, whatever be the circumstances. The Lord preached, "One can pursue spiritualism in the village and in the town. One may fail to do so in the village as well as in the town." The Lord was not unaware of the external circumstances but being an apostle of the supreme independence of the self he would not exaggerate these. A monk is permitted to stay in human habitation but he is exhorted to do so in frame as if he were alone. Isolation signifies a state of pristine purity, and craving company that of impurity. One who is alone is intact and vice versa. Lord Mahavira stressed upon the ultimate loneliness of man even in a familial existence. In a sustained cultivation of it the refulgence of non-violence makes itself felt.

The more you accept the external circumstances, the more you hanker after external help. As you learn to discount the pressure of circumstances, you scoff at all help. Ultimately, you await no help of any kind. There are beings crazy for external help. It is the way to vassalage, while an apathy to external props renders the latter superfluous.

A disciple questioned the Lord, "What use this spurning of external props, Oh, Lord?"

"Its reward is utter isolation. One who attains it, gets over all afflictions, the frames of mind that colour the ray white purity of human mind. He wins the serenity, the immunity to the defiling impressionability, the supreme bliss of *samadhi.*"

To an extrovert, the Lord's principle would indicate a renunciation of victuals and other bodily needs. To an introvert's eye, it implies an emancipation from the habitual inertia and allied pollutions. The ideal cherished by the Lord was no less than the supreme independence of the soul, and hence he chose to preach. "He alone is truly independent, who craves not the external appurtenances nor the internal ligaments that stain and bind the self in its purity.

LAIETY AND ASCETICISM

Lord Mahavira was a great propounder of asceticism in life. To him asceticism meant non-violence, but with the condition that a householder is in no way inferior to an ascetic, if the former be enlivened with a faith in this austere kind of conduct. Without this faith, however, a mere adoption of the exterior of a sadhu would not invest you with the true spirit of asceticism. Non-violence and asceticism are, in a way, synonymous. The issue of asceticism versus householdership was agitated. If monkhood were a prerequisite of non-violence, a householdership would imply a necessarily violent life. Why would one, then, not turn ascetic, rather than lead a violent life?

The Lord dealt with the tangle thus, "Some monks there be, who excel over the householders. They are well grounded in self-restraint and non-violence. These monks are preferable to householders."

The concept of asceticism in the Lord's terminology sought no sustenance from sartorial prescriptions nor from external formalism. It was a concept arrived at objectively. Hence he asserted that a householder is capable of cultivating non-violence par excellence so that without abandoning the world he may realise the supreme bliss. His concept of dharma was never riveted to the insignificant *e.g.* sartorial and allied formalism.

The Lord added, "An individual spurns the external signs of formalism and still does not spurn the dharma.

"Another individual doggedly retains the external formalism and lapses from the dharma.

"A third retains both.

"There be still another who falls from both."

A renunciation of householdership needs must be fortified with an immunity from the bondage of possessiveness and then alone the external form serves to signify the individual and also keep him alive to his station.

TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIONS

Religion is truth and that which is true is indivisible. It defies time, place and individual considerations. That which lies in the span of temporal, spatial and individual involvements may well be an adjunct of religion, but not the religion itself. The self is inseparable from dharma. The two exclusively cover each other. If it were distinct from self, it could never be instrumental in delivering the latter. That which helps in detecting the alien element of non-self and helps in discarding it with the aid of renunciation is religion or dharma. And still we find the ignorant beings labelling particular religions as their or others! What they purport to mean is religious organisation or sect and not the dharma that has the virtue to purge human soul. The Lord preached, "You may not realise your self in habitation. You may suffer a similar fate in solitude. The soul may choose to recognise itself in habitation just as in solitude." Emancipation is the fruit of dharma, and not of the externally definable forms of Jainism, Buddhism etc. The Lord resorted to a terminology acceptable to other religions as well to pronounce this truth. The robe of a Jain monk is no sine qua non for emancipation. One can achieve emancipation inspite of adopting any sartorial fashion, in case one has harboured real saintliness, *i. e.* freedom from ignorance and attachment. The free flowing stream of dharma defies all restrictions. It flows for all, impartially. It is universal and its rewards are not subject to times and climes; it is perennial. It being universal and perennial, is rationally acceptable. It is ever evident by experience. Its results are predictable and unassailable. It is inconceivable that one practise dharma and still not win purity of soul and deliverance. Each one who resorted to dharma at any point in time and space was invariably delivered. Individuality, time and place offer no resistance to the operation of this dharma. A lamp emits light by its own virtue at all places and times.

THE WHAT AND WHEREFOR OF DHARMA

The Lord's dharma is one of self. It is riveted to the concept of self. The self is hardly distinguishable from dharma, and so the latter from the former. It does not owe its existence to aught external to self.

That renders it inseparable from the self. However, since it is one of the numerous virtues of self, it is distinguishable as well, it being the character and self being the substratum.

When the state of consummation arrives and the self attains the primal purity, it is purged of all alien elements which are the contributions of the *pugalas*. Then the self transcends even the dharma as well as its reverse. So long as the self does not shed the dredges of the alien, the distinctions of dharma and non-dharma hold good. The factors driving the self towards the polluting elements are defined as non-dharma. The factors that counteract and destroy such pulls are termed as dharma. To the Lord, ruffleless serenity is dharma, and its reverse non-dharma. Attachment and aversion is inequability. As absence of the two is dharma. Non-violence, truth, non-thieving, continence, non-acquisition, serenity, forbearance, tolerance, fearlessness, simplicity, humility, purity and tidiness, self-restraint, austerity and the like are the practices conducive to dharma. In common parlance, we term these as intruments for developing human personality and in the language of spiritualism, the instruments of the development of the self.

One is likely to query, Why dharma? Dharma is meant to regulate human destiny would be the common response. Admitted that dharma regulates our destiny. But it is only half the truth. Dharma seeks to shape our present as well. Life ought to be serene and undefiled. How shall dharma reside in a defiled soul? Its habitat is a life distinguished by purity. If you are not rewarded with tranquillity, here and now, how shall dharma be effective hereafter? One who has cultivated dharma, has provided for one's now and hereafter, both. The unrelieved pessimists, who are hapless about the now and practise dharma for some future date are ignorant.

To quote the Lord:

"1. Practise not dharma for the present incarnation. Practise it not for worldly gains, in this life.

"2. Practise not dharma for the subsequent incarnations. Practise it not for worldly gains in those lives.

"3. Practise not dharma for earning credit and status."

"4. Practise dharma to purge the soul and realise it."

DHARMA AND FEARLESSNESS

The Lord discovered dharma in pure souls. What is purity, then? Know it that purity is no different from fearlessness. No doubt, non-volence is the primal purity, but where there is fear, there is no grain of non-violence. Hence fearlessness is purity.

Fearlessness is the starting point of non-violence. The essence of the Lord's preaching is—"Be not afraid. One who is afflicted with fear suffers segregation and helplessness. Such a phobiac leads a haunted existence.

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Such a scared being loses hold on his austerity and restraint. Nor is he, then, capable of bearing his responsibility. He disburdens himself of his moral responsibilities, prematurely. A scared being cannot stick to his morally prescribed path. Shun all fear on that account.

Fear not untoward situations. Be not afraid of alien environment. Be not afraid of indisposition and cureless ailments. Be not afraid of age and death. Be invincible. A heart inspired with invincibility can win the reward of truth."

UNRUFFLED EQUABILITY

The Lord's concept of dharma can be expressed by one word—equability. All souls are equal. This knowledge sheds all ignorance signified by my-ness and thy-ness. This knowledge leads to equability. It is the feeling of thy-ness which provokes us to animosity and the feeling of my-ness leads to attachment. These proclivities generate inequability. When these two opposite proclivities negate each other to create equability, the soul is rewarded with unperturbed serenity.

In Lord Mahavira's world, such an aspirant is unruffled in the face of loss and gain, pleasure and pain, life and death, credit and blame, honour and dishonour. These artificial situations are imposed ones. They drive the self to uneven planes. The state of imperturbability lies beyond these.

The Lord repeated, the self is neither deficient nor proficient. It is ever equable. On the very first rung of spiritual pursuit, one is required to discard the awareness of progress and retrogression. So long as the aspirant is obsessed with feelings of superiority and inferiority, he is not grounded in his path. He is no better than the ignorant masses who revel in their castes, classes and distinctions of superiority and inferiority.

The Lord did not care to condemn casteism. Nor did he deem it to be his prime duty to decry sacrificial rites, violence attending thereupon and slavery. He was dedicated to propound the dharma of equability. The refutation of evil practices was incidental to it. Where the religion has its moorings in such an equability, casteism has hardly any chance of flourishing. Where this equability is cherished, sacrificial rites and slavery are bound to be mitigated. If the Lord would aim at arraigning these evils exclusively in his preaching, his gospel would have been a grossly incomplete one with no lasting effect. His gospel, however, transcends all time as his objective had been to visualise human soul in its unruffled aspect. The Lord eyed the truth variously and he propounded it in terms of the relativity of *syadvada*. He thereby upheld the doctrine of equability. A partial vision fails to reveal the truth. Similar is the case with its partial expression. The truth is indivisible and whole. That which exists is true. That which is true has endless aspects. That decided the objective and comprehensive vision of Lord Mahavira.

There are semantic barriers that permit only one aspect of truth to be expressed, while the latter bears numberless ones. The rest of the infinite aspects, thus, remain unrevealed. A tangential enunciation of one aspect can inform us about that aspect only at the expense of the other ones. That limits us to enunciate it relatively only and we can hope to enunciate the whole of it by bringing out the essential and the common virtues that inhere a thing.

In his objective vision, he chose to speak the language of relativity. Each substance is perennial as well as transient. In respect of the conservation of its form, it is lasting. In respect of the ceaseless change it is undergoing, it is transient. That applies to all substances. No substance is either exclusively similar to, nor completely different from another substance. All substances resemble one another and they also differ from one another. Again, a thing is permanent in so far as it conserves its aspects of existence and it is transitory on account of its being devoid of other aspects. Nothing is completely describable nor ineffable. A solitary aspect is describable at a moment, but the thing in its comprehensiveness is ineffable at any point of time.

One who knows the conservation of things conserves his unruffied serenity in the face of life and of death. One who knows that all substance is transitory, again, retains his imperturbability in meetings and partings.

An awareness of the underlying community frees one of antipathy. An awareness of the underlying singular specificness frees one of infatuation.

One who has learnt of the timeless existence of each substance, does not shun the independent existence of another. One who knows that all substances are transitory, fetters not another.

One who knows that each substance is describable, does not consider truth to be beyond the ken of human tongue.

One who knows that each substance is ineffable, ceases to show affectation for particular words. Thus, one who is alive to the various aspects of truth, alone is blessed with equability.

EMANCIPATION

Dharma is consummated into emancipation. Emancipation implies peace. Unto this last, the self oscillates between quiet and disquiet. Peace is a complete salving of the discord. Essentially, the soul is consciousness. It is neither quiet nor unquiet. It is in the context of disquiet that we define salvation as quiet. Until the supreme quiet is achieved, self-realisation stays as the final goal. The moment self-realisation is achieved, the goal and its accomplishment fuse into one. That reveals salvation as an achievement. Till the final achievement, the soul is bound with the fetters of pleasure and pain. Once its real nature emerges, it rises aloft, free of the fetters. Salvation is, thus, a freedom also. The fullest evolution of soul is salvation and each individual who aspires to it is entitled to it. Only they are debarred who never aspire.

WAR AND DISARMAMENT

The Lord was a source of the perennial stream of non-violence. To him all violence was unpardonable. His world was immaculate of the toxins of war, enmity and discord. An individual being inimical to another was inconceivable to him. In reply to the aggressive values obtaining in that era, ("You live in heaven posthumously, if you fall in the battlefield and enjoy the spoils of the conquest if you survive.") his response was, "All aggression is infernal. Ye self! fight with your (baser) counterpart. To what avail these external wars?"

A virtuous existence warrants such non-violent faith. No doubt, there be many who are not inspired by such ideals. There are myriads who place reliance on war, invasion and usurping another's right. They remain unmoved by the sermon of fighting with their own baser self. To such materially obsessed beings, the Lord exhorted: "Be not aggressive. A retaliation is equally violent. Violence is succumbing to the external conditions of which we are essentially free."

The war waged as a retaliatory measure is equally demoniac. Such is the terminable chain of armament that one weapon is met with another. The successive weapons are still more devastating. To man is due an awareness of this fact and an abnegation of these temptations to effect a total disarmament. This is the way to peace and no other. If humanity chooses to opt for peace, it has got to subscribe to this ideology sooner or later.

The grace of the Lord's word would not bless us if we shell ourselves from it. In such a case it will stay as the grace of Lord Mahavira's word only. It will bless us only when we submit to it implicitly. If we detatch ourselves of our rigid self and care to render his word into practice, we can be rewarded of the desirable. Mahavira emphasised it as the ultimate truth. The gist of his utterance is that paving the gap between knowledge and faith is rewarded with the true realisation of truth. The utterrance also shifts its ground when the gap between our faith and conduct vanishes. Then the utterance merges into our conduct. It then ceases to be the utterance of an individual other than our own self. It becomes our own virtue. Mere sermons cannot benefit us any far so long as we do not assimilate these by making these as an integral part of our conduct.

MAHAVIRA :
THE PREACHER

"It is the self who is the author of its happiness and affliction. It alone is its friend and its foe. Let it be restrained. One who restrains it wins the reward of lasting happiness. One is required to struggle with one's self only. When one is crowned with success in the venture, one conquers the universe and is delivered of all affliction."

"Deem not another as your foe. It is your own faith that is projected in the other as friendship and an absence of it as enmity. Be unprejudiced towards all. Each will appear as a friend to you, then. To regard another as enemy is to suffer self-mistrust. It is preferable to presume friendship in the opponent rather than start with the presumption of his harbouring enmity with us and then to attempt to befriend him. Here lies the germ of world peace."

"Seek not quietude without. Seek in your own self the everlasting fountains of quietude. Make a venture and the stream of quietude will burst forth unhindered. Material comforts may pander to you with pleasures but the real happiness is far to seek.

To seek the quintessence of lasting peace, go into your self. Practise equilibrium. Each iota of yours will, then, emanate peace."

"Man! you own immense might. You are the maker of your own destiny. Have faith in your own enterprise. Make an effort and the result is assured. He alone is venturesome who banks upon his own initiative. This faith will win for you the summum bonum."

Ideologies differ from man to man. Each individual values his own ideology. It issues from his experience. A subscription of all of us to a single ideology is an impossibility. However, a difference of opinion need not breed truculence. To thrust your opinion on another is a sort of violence. Persuasion is permissible but not a coercive imposition of ideas.

Dogmatism is violence. Truth ought to be faithfully embraced and not obsessively held. Opinionatedness is always disdained. No vehemence should occur during an honest exchange of ideas. Attempt not to convert another to your views, willy nilly.

War is an infernal machinery. Man does not fight of his own accord. Under compulsion, he begins to build his armoury. Such is the compelling chain of events that a fresh weapon has got to be devised to match the preceding one, in destructive capacity. Man has no alternative but to give up this race and resort to disarmament. If we desire peace, this is the only course available.

"He alone is virtuous who shuns sin during day and during night, in isolation and in company, in sleep and in waking and thus escapes moral lapse. Such beings never lose touch with the Supreme Soul, and are transmuted into the latter, ultimately."

"Uproot unhappiness, lock, stock and barrel. Those who seek to remedy unhappiness without remedying its root-cause, can never escape it."

"Casteism is irrational. He alone is exposed to such vitiated ideas who is not grounded in truth. It is one soul that reposes in the coloured and the white, the oriental and the occidental, the virtuous and the vicious, the male and the female. Be not swayed by the pride of your caste. Boost not your ego with the complex of being superior to another. Be not mean or piteous by considering self as inferior to another. Be equal in all situations. Man reaps as he sows. Good actions beget good results and the bad bad results.

"The main sign of Dharma is non-violence. The next significance is stoicism. One who loses his grip on stoicism under stress, cannot practice non-violence. A truly non-violent being would confer love on his enemies like his friends. He can put up with insults with fortitude. The one capable of being indifferent to happy situation and the unhappy one, dispassionately, is stoic and non-violent.

"The dharma reposes in a virtuous life. Dharma is the last thing to be found in a non-virtuous life.

Dharma is not only a conveyor to the happy destiny, it is as much desirable for a happy existence in the present. One who is not rewarded with peace in one's present existence by virtue of one's moral conduct can hardly hope to achieve it at some furture stage.

"Practise not dharma for prosperity and comforts nor for religious credit, but for the purgation of your own self."

MAHAVIRA : WHO FELT THE PULSE OF HIS TIMES

Vituperation is the test of one's patience. Those who are provoked easily, cannot hope to achieve much in life. The one with great tolerance is born to perform great deeds. An individual is guided by his discretion and principles to tackle the changing situations in life. An intelligent being can size a man correctly. Goshalaka, the disciple of Lord Mahavira, judged the latter in his own fashion and he tried to brain-wash Ardra Kumar accordingly.

Ardra Kumar had been graced with the memory of his last incarnation and was submitting himself to the tutelage of the Lord after his formal initiation. Goshalaka, on the other hand, had abandoned the following of the Lord and sought to impress people with his prophesy. The two came across each other. Goshalaka sought to wean the other from the influence of the Master.

"Are you making for the company of the Lord?"

"I propose to submit to him forthwith," said Ardra Kumar.

"Are you not gullible? Alas, if you knew, what kind he be. I have very much been his disciple. I know too well him and his conduct. Shall I confide in you, how he has deteriorated in morality, of late? He has ceased to be the austere Mahavira of bygone days. Then he lived alone. He has abandoned that severe austerity. You can see for yourself that he seeks the company of householders. He affects sanctity to dupe the simple beings like you. He sermonises in the distinguished audiences of males and females. He endeavours to sway the masses with suave tongue. He has as good as raised a regular family and has assured a regular livelihood for himself. There were times when I saw him leading a solitary existence, when he took the coarsest of meals. Now he has had too much of the tedium of privation. He has dismissed me and has switched over to living in thronged villages and towns. Now he indulges in delectable dishes. It is for you to realise, Ardra Kumar, how capricious your Mahavira is. His present conduct hardly blends with that of past. If anything, the two present a striking contrast to each other. It goes without saying that either of the two varieties of conduct can possibly be acceptable. Either his past conduct was virtuous or the present one is. If his conduct today happens to be proper, what made him affect in the past...that which was not a genuine piece of behaviour? In case his piety in the past was not affected, what made him abandon it? If you exercise your discretion, the matter should be plain enough to you. Review the two set of circumstances:— 1. He lived alone, then: now he is ever attended upon by multitudes of householders. 2. He implicitly practised muteness, then : now he revels in sermonising. 3. He subsisted on the most abstemious food, then: now he gourmandises sumptuous victuals.

"The two kinds of conduct stand in evident contrast like the sun and the shade. If solitude was virtuous, why has he attracted the crowd of followers? If silence was commendable, why does he incessantly preach ? If austere meals were virtuous, why does he crave and enjoy delicious foods? Either he had been in the wrong till then or he is so today. Ardra, you hardly have a choice but to concede to one of the two possibilities."

Goshalaka would not yield. He further tried to make a point. Your Mahavira nurtures attachment, and aversions in his heart. That renders him timorous. He is scared of public places lest he be exposed to the probing glances of the intelligent, the clever and the accomplished beings. The men of attainments can unravel any mystery. In case they probe him on the point of desirability of shunning the palatial houses, what reply can he conceive to satisfy them? He avows to spare the use of mansions, and he himself revels in the cooling shades of such mansions! He apprehends such a flaying at their hands and that motivates him to raise a barricade of families around himself. He has no cheek to face the masses of critics. That goes a long way to expose your master what he, in fact, is."

Goshalaka continued to rain cinders, as it were, on the tree of dharma. "Ardra Kumar, bear me out that your Mahavira is no less a bargainer than a common dealer. As a trader travels afar to accumulate wealth, so does your Mahavira when he simulates meditation, for material advantages. He courts his followers for the sake of fame. Preaching to him is no more than a vocation like any other. He matches a trader in selfishness. To me he has no grain of transcendental values."

Ardra Kumar listened to him with patience. Then he replied without any sign of irritation:—

"Goshalaka, you reveal great ignorance about the Lord and his worth. The Lord has ever been alone. He is so today and will be ever so. Irrespective of his living in habitation or wilderness, he is ever alone. The Lord may preach to numberless followers; he is with his own self only. The cause is that he has ridden himself of all infatuation and antipathy. Silence may be a virtue: for one who has subordinated his senses and mind and purged the speech, preaching is as virtuous. To him silence was a spiritual pursuit, just as preaching happens to be today. Silence catered to obliterate the impressions of previous births, just as preaching does today. You could have been saved of the confusion, had you cared to use your wisdom. The Lord has not sought preceptorhood for the poor consideration of rich and buttered victuals. It is for the sheer altruism that the Lord chose this role.

"The Lord commits nothing that is unworthy. He never preaches that which is not worth the trouble, his actions are never puerile. He cannot be coerced to preach in a particular fashion by wielding a wand of authority by an autocrat. He has conquered fear. He has the power to resolve all doubts. He will respond to questions if it conduces to human weal. Fame is not the motive for which he preaches. Nor does he do so for livelihood. The only motive is the good of the people. His deeds are always meaningful. He would not mind travelling vast distances, if preaching there be useful, else he would spare to utter one word, before readily available audiences. He interprets the religion before the rich and the poor, alike. That reveals him as one who is absolutely freed of all infatuation and antipathy. He would not so much as tread the ground where there be any occasion to pander to these tendencies. He never has a scruple in visiting public places. What would scare him? It is only the aggravation of infatuation and antipathy that can ever scare him. What is selfish and what is selfless is not that easy to judge, Goshalaka!

"To the truly free, self-interest is no different from selflessness. Whatever he performs is ever selfless. The discernment between the selfish and the selfless is valid in the mundane context only. The Lord is immune from the vile backlash of actions that bind man. He is engaged in the mighty task of deterging himself of any possible impression of the past. I do endorse you in some measure. He is selfish and greedy, but his greed is aimed at seeking moral escalation. He never defaults to go to a place to live there and preach if moral benefits are going to accrue. You alone know what makes you compare him with the violent, the acquisitive and the incontinent, and the bargaining dealers. Perverse is your logic. The Lord is an embodiment of non-violence. He has thrown to winds all acquisition to become a Yogi. He is practising the most stringent austerities of continence. He moves in the masses for the sheer purpose of moral ends and self-realisation. Would you call it trading mentality? If it is not a moral pursuit, what else is? It is the policy of a great altruist. The traders are subject to the precariousness of gains and losses. The Lord's venture is ever crowned with a mighty success. It is rewarding to himself as well as to others. You are mincing matters when you dub the transcendental miracles of Yoga performed by the Lord as conceits. He is nothing but non-violent. He is one with universal compassion. He is embedded in dharma. His actions are purely wisdom-oriented. Miracles follow him and not he the miracles."

To the profound and resolving words of Ardra Kumar, Goshalaka retorted, "If preaching and assemblage of followers for common weal is permissible, what sin do we commit if we take water with living minuscules, if we consume seeds and viands, if we eat without putting in labour and have concourse with the female ?"

Goshalaka was piqued. Stirred and indignant at the pithy words of Ardra Kumar, he added, "By your words you are indicting all the schools of thought, Ardra Kumar. All the philosophers extant should take exception to what you say."

Ardra Kumar poured cold water over Goshalaka's wrath. "The disciples of Mahavira are deficient in berating others. A thinker is permitted to express his own opinion freely. I may also be excused if I venture to do so. I drag nobody in dispute. I have only endeavoured to bring out the fallacies you evince in your observations. To arraign any individual is far from my thought."

The pacifying gesture of Ardra Kumar imparted much to Goshalaka although the latter failed to award any thing to the former. He was compelled to be tongue-tied after the hysterical spell. Ardra Kumar made for the uplifting company of the great apostle of non-violence, Lord Mahavira.

MAHAVIRA : THE INVINCIBLE

Mahavira was Mahavira because of his fiery invincibility. His gospel of radicalism exhorted us, "Keep your fire buring. To permit it to die is sinful. Burn like a flame to incendiarise your environment and convert the moonless night around into a refulgent one."

He set his self ablaze till he became a mighty torch. He reinforced his doctrine of non-violence, that non-violence is the noblest path, with another— "Stoicism is the noblest path." Non-violence of one who is not endowed with stoicism is the non-violence of the timorous. On the other hand the stoicism of one who is not blessed with non-violence is going to convert into conceit. Timorousness and conceit are, both, sinful. Mahavira would commend neither course.

In his philosophy, human equability serves as the propelling force of human achievement. His career is one of immense forbearance. The sufferings crumbled at his touch, not he at the touch of sufferings. Human might may be canalised to cause injury or as to suffer it. Apotheosisor of the animal might may torture others and such a one is not blessed with forbearance. One who has the true faith in one's own might, can bear suffering but cannot cause the same to others.

The intrepid flame of the Lord's might made itself known in the form of 1. fearlessness and 2. moral enlightenment. The torch of human achievement burns low when man lies low in the quagmire of ignorance. When faced with the fear of death it is extinguished. It is also put out when the subject is paralysed with selfishness. Again, when one is overwhelmed with the apprehension of material loss or when one is swayed with the excitement of an imminent gain or flabbergasted with an impending misfortune or when one is enraptured with overwhelming honours or transfixed in anticipation of humiliation, one is not one's true self.

The Lord kept the flame of human capacity aloft and consequently environmental factors could not engross him. These factors succeed in throttling us when our resources wane. The Lord perceived the God within. He discovered the quenchless streams of human resources within. One who discovers these veins of boundless energy dominate every set of circumstances. One who has yet to discover the God within succumbs to the circumstances.

It was a common belief, then, that spiritual pursuit is feasible in solitude only.

To it the response of the Lord was—A willing aspirant is alone even when he is surrounded by men.

It was so believed that meditation and penances are practicable only in wilderness.

The Lord's response was—None is barred from undergoing spiritual practices even in human habitation. Without keeping in touch with one's own divinity, such efforts are doomed in any set of circumstances.

It was a common dogma that males alone were eligible to have spiritual attainments.

The Lord pronounced—None is eligible to make spiritual pursuit so long as one has not obliterated the discrimination between the sexes, be he male or female. One who is conscious of the same changeless soul in the male as well as the female alone qualifies for the task.

Before the Lord's advent, it was so believed that an ascetic alone was capable of undergoing spiritual pursuits, although there were others who held that the householder alone qualified for it.

The Lord enlightened—"Without observances neither the ascetic nor the householder is qualified for being an aspirant. A true observant alone is eligible for this difficult course."

Various sectarians had been exhorting people to enter their fold with the promise of emancipation.

The Lord asserted—One who is enlightened can win emancipation without resorting to the sects as such. The ignorant can never see salvation to whatsoever sect he belonged. The ignorant are fettered, the enlightened shall be delivered.

It is stated that Mahavira was a rebel against killing of life entailed in sacrifices and that he tiraded against casteism and slavery. The argument does not convey much. In my view what the Lord sought to establish is equability and an extermination of unvirtuousness. Sacrificial violence was caused by the unvirtuous trends and so was casteism. Slavery also had its origin in this malady. The Lord's effort to seek equilibrium resulted in the weeding of these pernicious tendencies. However, it was never the ideal of the Lord, but only the happy bye-product of his efforts.

If these alone were the goal of the Lord, he could not have attained his true stature. The world would not have been inspired by his matchless performance for so long.

The struggle between the equilibrium and its opposite is interminable. The Lord sought to restore equilibrium and he transcended all time. Sacrificial violence is a thing of past. Casteism is also on its last legs. Slavery has been exterminated. And still equilibrium is hard to achieve. Even today we are subject to the binding attachments to life and we are scared of death. This is a proof of our mental bondage. This disequilibrium leads to similar overt acts. It is given to one like Mahavira to be able to eradicate such mighty evils.

The Lord would never claim any divinity. Nor did he seek a following. He would not accept the cleavage of the worshipper and the worshipped. He would declare, "You are divine, all and one, in case you succeed to attain enlightenment. You are debarred from divinity if you are wanting in enlightenment. That is bound to slam the doors of your achievement. Then, the divinity inhering in you goes dormant. Throw wide open your doors of achievement and your divinity is revived."

Mahavira opened up new vistas of human development in respect of personality and creativity. All who seek a richly endowed life are bound to crave it. Those who are blind to these potentialities seem to be in a still greater need of this message. Those who are leading the life of cowards needs must attend to it. We need not perpetuate the memory of the Lord by worshipping him but by becoming one like him.

MAHAVIRA: THE ENTHUSIAST OF DEED

Mahavira was born in the sixth century B. C. at Vaishali (Basadh), the capital town of Videh, district Muzaffarpur. Siddhartha was his father and Trisala his mother. He hailed from a warrior class. He was brought up like a prince in full luxury. Adolescence being past, he was wedded and was also blessed with a daughter. The parents of Lord Mahavira were the followers of Saint Parshwanath. Subsequent to the death of the saint, Mahavira expressed a desire to turn an ascetic. However, his elder brother Nandivardhana dissuaded him from this course. Mahavira put up with his station as a householder for another period of two years. When he was thirty, he renounced the family to win transcendental existence. Peace was his goal, and radical spiritualism the incidental outcome of the venture. For twelve long years he meditated, mute and alone. He consummated his austerities into the supreme bliss of the highest meditation. The aspirant became the enlightened. Having got over all attachment, he was named as "Jina".

He established the four categories of sacred order or tirthas—1. monk, 2. nun, 3. male householder who is an aspirant and 4. his female counterpart. That justifies his being named as tirthankara. Mahavira the seer observed the universe, experienced it and explained it by means of his truly objective vision. The highest reward in his ethical order is non-violence. It has been variously described as equability as well. Equability is a science in itself. However, disequilibrium is also timeless. A soul may be incarnated as an ant, a donkey and a man by its moral desert. Disequilibrium is not within the perview of human endeavour. However, it is given to man to remedy the social kind of disequilibrium since it is his own creation.

Equilibrium does not stand for showing that all individuals merit identical features, health and intelligence. It only signifies an unperturbed, unbiased mind that maintains its even tenor in reward and in punishment without falling a victim to the emotional tide, jubilation and dejection. The inborn disparities of body and mind are immaterial. The emotional disparity that discriminates between the mighty, the intelligent and the authoritarian as against the insignificant, the weakling and the dull is perverse. Lord Mahavira enunciated the perennial truth when he preached us to abstain from all killing. He also warned against causing bodily pain to others. Torture none, he added. Subject no man and woman to vassalage. Duress to subjugate another is bad. He is

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The stream of non-violence that flowed from the Lord's thought, ramified itself into the minutest aspect of life. Casteism, linguism and notions of superiority were extensions of violence. The clarion call of revolutionary thought burst forth into a shrill note of its own accord, to assail all human perversion.

The commentators hold that the Lord sought to explode casteism, castigate ritualistic butchering and expose the futility of rites in his movement. That is like hidebinding the lofty ideal. His goal was never short of emancipation. He would not be satisfied with mere condemnation of casteism. His aim was the practice of non-violence, for the sake of deliverance. The glorious non-violence exposed the evils that pollute life. While interpreting non-violence he again edifies the protean character that man has led him attain the immeasurable zenith and the inconceivable nadir in his span. The notions of great and the small are a balderdash. Each of us is as great and as small as anybody else. Hierarchies of castes are fallacious. The criterion of moral incorruptibility should entitle one to a higher class. He alone is noble who is austere. Lord Mahavira initiated Harikeshbal, of low caste and Ardra Kumar, a non-Arya.

The pedants of that age were suffused with vain ideas about the medium of expression. It was a variety of violence. The Lord unpedestalled the linguism of the vain when he chose vernacular as the medium of his expression as he had realised that a language is nothing if it does not serve as a transparent conveyance for the benefit of the aspirant.

Sacrificial violence was incompatible with the non-violent ideology. Enhancing the compass of non-violence, the Lord said, "Just as killing and torturing is violence, so is egocentrism and dogmatism." Till your vision is not simple and relative, you fail to observe things objectively and define them correctly.

He was neither a fanatic after knowledge nor after mere action. He as much subscribed to logical approach as to the need of credulity. He explained the three steps that lead to emancipation—righteous vision, righteous knowledge and righteous conduct. He prescribed faith for intuiting a thing and logic for apperceiving it. He insisted upon truthful conduct in life. He was not keen on the disciples but on their virtuousness. His first disciple Gautam had a vehement dispute with Ananda. The latter insisted to have had a perception of supra-human planes. Gautam would pay no credence to this averment. The debate rose to vigorous dimensions. Gautam approached the Master and confided in him the cause of debate.

The Lord said, "Ananda speaks the truth. You are in the wrong. Go and express regrets to him, for your erroneous petulance."

Gautam, in his greatness, followed the command of the Lord. He stays in the compass of the Lord who is grounded in indefatigable austerities. To him austere life meant a purgation of the urges and a conquest over overt actions. His sacred being is no more with us and still his gospel embodying it does not cease to be with us. Our motto ought to be attending to it to win complete deliverance.

MAHAVIRA : THE EQUABLE

Dharma purports to achieve emancipation. It, however, is of no small value in our diurnal existence. Lord Mahavira defined dharma as equability. He averred :

"Be unruffled in prosperity and adversity, life and death, applause and contumely, honour and disgrace."

We are, generally, aware of the application of the doctrine to the plane of spiritualism only. The interpretation is, in a way, correct. But it ought to be realised that it is as much applicable to the spiritual pursuit as to the day to day life. Equability is as much conducive to physical well being as to the spiritual one. Mental disequilibrium as much fetters the soul as it ungears the body. Medicine has demonstrated convincingly that a mind at peace with itself preserves the bodily composure. A disharmony of mind, on the other hand, breeds nervous tension. When the mind is in discord, the body ceases to function in accord. In excitement and in anger, the blood vessels of the cardiac system distend. It results in physical ailments.

Mental imbalance diseases the body and causes ailments of the psychosomatic kind. Initially, nervous tension manifests itself and subsequently, the harmonal disturbance. Such unfortunate beings suffer from the symptoms of trepidation and pathological bashfulness. Their faces grow red. In phobias, the epidermal hue goes white. The least company of an unwelcome individual causes headache and neckache. Acute fear can cause the distress of cold feet. Orthopaedic discomfort, paralysis, diabetes, dental trouble and intestinal disorders result from a disordered mind. Severe misanthropy expresses itself in the form of dermatitis.

James Conic writes : Nervous tension and emotional drives give rise to stone in gall-bladder and arteriosclerosis. Often the mind results in the killing of its victim by means of these two weapons. Heightened nervous tension releases adrenalin in blood circulation accordingly. This harmone causes the constriction of capillaries. It percolates into the arteries of the heart also. In case of severe constriction the patient dies.

In case we learn to keep anxiety, fear and depression at an arm's length, our circulation will not be impaired and our arteries will be spared the constriction and the mightiest offence to our vanity will not be able to afflict us with cancer, consumption, diabetes and such other wasting diseases.

It is a proverbial saying that the body made of various chemical constituents is subordinate to our consciousness, a destruction of which destroys the constituents themselves. In case the consciousness is healthy, the intelligence keeps flowing in order. Hence preserve your consciousness intact.

There is another aphoristic saying—Neither one is delivered by subscribing to the Svetamber sect nor to the Digamber one, neither by philosophising nor by dogmatism. One is sure to be delivered if one's consciousness stays free of the chromatic element.

Eradication of the chromatic elements that colour our conscience and equability are identical in meaning. The chromatic elements are wrath, vanity, material involvement and avarice. They breed mental discord. An eradication of these vices is equivalent to placidity, forbearance, affable temper, unavariciousness and contentment. These virtues reward us with mental composure.

One enjoys an immunity from chimerical fears to the extent one is upright and simple in life. Uprightness is another name for freedom from the chromatic elements.

One is spared of tensions to the extent one is placid. Placidity implies freedom from the chromatic elements.

The less the mania for possession in man, the more are the chances of his being intact of nervous tensions. This freedom from the possessive mania is another name for freedom from chromatic elements.

The more affable your temper, the greater is the resistance to psychiatric indications. Mental tenor implies a freedom from the chromatic elements.

We comprehend Mahavira's doctrine by realising the principle of freedom from chromatic elements and the resultant equability. Else he is likely to be relegated to our reverent memory, rather than pervade our life.

HOW TO ATTAIN DIVINITY?

DETERMINISM

Lord Mahavira would not put up with a situation in which divine being and the devotee choose to be content with their respective lots. Be it as it may with respect to divinity, the devotee is not supposed to be a stick in the mud. The Lord, when he was born, had not evinced divine characters. His parents had been the followers of Lord Parsvanath. Mahavira also succeeded the family tradition. However, the day arrived, when he was not content with beating the trodden path. He chose to be a divine being like his own divine ideal.

Either the devotee who persists in the mutuality of worshipper and the worshipped is not a true disciple or his ideal is not a true ideal. No sooner the Lord rose to the divine plane, than he averred that each soul is endowed with latest divinity which is crying for becoming patent and converting the being into a divine person. The Lord, then, awoke to new heights of confidence. Such an outburst of power is signified by assiduous spiritual effort. The ultimate truth could not elude him and he personified divinity.

EQUABILITY AND ITS CULTIVATION

In the Lord's view a deviation from the path of real goal is an unpardonable lapse. Before we launch on our path, we have to choose the ultimate goal. The Lord's goal was nothing short of divinity. To some it might appear as a craving after a status. Divinity is far from being a status or honour. Where all status and honours cease, to hold their validity, there comes into being the truly divine. Status owes its existence to hierarchies. The Lord realised the irrelevance of hierarchies in the domain of spiritualism. Hierarchies obtain in the mundane context only. The craze to be this or that is perverse and unnatural. The Lord opted for divinity. He chose equability for himself and thus became divine.

FORTITUDE

To seek pleasure is a universal trait. Each of us, invariably, shuns pain. However, this desire is not adequate to procure pleasures for us. Visitation of pain is inevitable, thanks to the mental trend we often have. Desire for pleasure and aversion to pain impedes our spiritual escalation. Mahavira accepted this premise. He countenanced adversities with great fortitude. His stoicism made him Mahavira ("the brave"). Earlier he was only Vardhaman ("one who grows"). Impediments are a great barrier to human progress. One who is prostrated by these obstacles is stranded. One undaunted by these impediments carves one's way through thick and thin to achieve the ultimate goal. Such a one becomes Mahavira. It was this intrepid fortitude that made him Mahavira.

FEARLESSNESS

Many do know that slavery does not facilitate progress, but few practise it in their conduct. So long as fear lurks in human mind, freedom is a far cry. It has a variety of manifestations and man is subject to its fetters in more ways than one. Mahavira tendered no delay in cutting this Gordian knot. He stood vis a vis death in its full fury. He was exposed to its terrifying aspects. The Lord refused to be scared at any cost. The glands of fear had been disintegrated. He rose like Proteus from the sea in utter fearlessness. That rendered him divine.

NON-COERCION

One who admits defeat has to resort to violence. Such a being is vanquished not by others but by his own self. He who submits to circumstances fails to attain his true stature. Mahavira would submit to none. Neither man would vanquish him nor his own self, nor the circumstances. Non-violence was ingrained in him. He and non-violence were indistinguishable.

Mahavira and non-violence became synonymous. His non-violence had its beginning in fearlessness, its middle in dispassion and its end in equability. That saved his doctrine from defiance. That preserved the essential modesty of the doctrine. Truth was never offered resistance. It was welcome. Simplicity was cultivated and not coercion.

Gautam was his senior-most disciple. He was the greatest monk. Ananda was a householder—a sravaka.

Said Ananda, "I can witness so many planes of existence."

Gautam averred, "Never has it happened. You have got to do penances."

Ananda insisted, "Well it is to be seen whether it is a liar who is required to do penances or a truthful being, in the opinion of the Lord."

Gautam, "A liar as ever."

Ananda, "Then it falls to your lot to submit to this course, Sir."

Gautam made for the place where the Lord happened to be. The Lord's response was, "Gautam, the assertion of Ananda is true enough. It is you who has resisted truth. You should go to Ananda to apologise."

Ananda saw the other retracing his footsteps, and he was jubilant.

Mahavira was a worshipper of truth, not of individuals. He shed all obstinacy and he became God.

SHEDDING ATTACHMENT

So long as knowledge is not candid, it eludes man. But it is the attachment that pollutes consciousness and not knowledge or absence of it. When human vision is aberrated, man ceases to apperceive vividly and objectively. When conduct is kinked, man has an improper kind of behaviour. Mahavira sought to treat this attachment. Human effort is always rewarded with success. Attachment languished, ultimately, and the unobstructed vision of truth was granted. Thus he attained divinity.

LET MAHAVIRA REMAIN MAHAVIRA!

Mahavira attained liberation two thousand and five hundred years ago, and still the wisdom that he bequeathed to humanity is so profound that it is as evident and immediate as ever. Obsolete is that which loses appeal for humanity. Not so with the Lord's wisdom. It has its perennial appeal. That makes him ever fresh. If we abstain from colouring him with our prejudices and leave him as he essentially is, his appeal will never lose its message. It is not uncommon that the disciples colour their preceptor with their own hue instead of borrowing his colour. That renders the genuine message evanescent.

What Mahavira preached is not subject to any change. It is our subjectivism that has created numerous images of Mahavira. Mahavira the individual is one, but Mahavira the preacher is more than one. Our concept of him as a preacher is not always identical with that of others, in full precision. That agitates the dispute, who owns the Lord, in fact. None would concede his incompetence to comprehend the gospel. Each of us is obsessed with the idea of the veracity of his own path, howsoever unacceptable the premise be to others. Since we are many, we multiply Mahavira also.

National poet Maithili Sharan Gupta said, "I have endeavoured to pay poetic tributes to the great souls of the past like Rama, Buddha etc. It is my aspiration to be able to do so to Lord Mahavira also. The hurdle is that I fail to find his authentic biography that might be acceptable to both the sects, Svetambara and Digambara. Which of the views should be accepted? Whom to please out of the two? Suggest to me the device to fulfil my cherished desire."

What alternative could Acharya Shri offer? Svetambara sect ascribe to him a marital status. The Digambara tradition denies it to him. There are other anomalies as well. However, these anomalies are insignificant as compared to the ideological ones. The cause seems to be semantic confusion. The absence of an authentic interpreter is conspicuous. The respective sects also fail to offer one. The scriptural versions are as hoary as two or two and a half thousand years. The passage of time has obliterated the patterns of thought. These factors create a hiatus in the interpretation of scriptures. It is never easy to grasp the connotation of words without knowing the context.

Queen Chellana was asleep. It was chilly winter. Her fore-am was exposed out of the blanket, and she felt the chill. In a twilight of consciousness, she blurted out, "What would his plight be?"

King Shrenik or Magadh wove his brow. She must be lost in the thought of her lover. His mind was an arena of suspicion. He ordered the queen's palace to be gutted. Ultimately, the truth was vindicated. Chellana had witnessed a monk meditating in the jungle that evening. The touch of the chill made her feel vicariously the lot of the monk. Her commiseration with the monk reveals something different in this context. Not knowing the antecedents, the king had been blinded with rage.

Those who are not unaware of the subject know the immense difficulties that beset the interpreter who is not knowledgeable with the context. Ancient commentators have interpreted a single text variously. They were not certain of the exact connotation. There are terms in the scriptures whose meaning is far from clear and there are texts which have to be dismissed with the excuse that the liberated beings alone could explain the meaning. And still, in our vain glory, we presume to know the entire truth. We are hardly entitled in these circumstances to propagate the Lord's truth by merely celebrating his anniversaries. We fail to give a unity to the Lord's vision. Our success can be guaranteed only by revealing him to the masses in his true colour.

It is least justifiable to impose our orthodoxy and our prejudices in the gospel of the Lord. If we presume that there is no more scope for investigating canonical literature, we are mistaken. Such fallacies have retarded the stream of knowledge. It has cost us our freshness of vision. Our knowledge seems to have little impact on our life. Our energies seem to exhaust in preserving the knowledge we have already acquired. No energies are being deployed in enhancing it. In the disciplines of physical sciences, in botany, biology etc., new discoveries are taking place each day. In such a progressive era, shall we be able to retain the freshness of the Lord's gospel by repeating the obsolete and crammed texts? A research-oriented outlook is the need of the day. Our mass of canonical literature can be harnessed to new uses by means of such a treatment only. We must dedicate our lives to resuscitate the ancient verities. We have to take to heart the criteria evolved by the modern scientific era to evaluate and disseminate truth. That alone will reinvigorate the Lord's gospel without any loss of time.

HOW TO ENHANCE THE GLORY OF JAINISM?

The glorific lasts, the rest goes unnoticed. The analogy of bright fire holds good in some measure for all things. Jainism is an institution. It is also an entity like any other. It also calls for light and heat. Since it is endowed with the two virtues, it is still surviving. In the contemporary era of materialism, intellectualism, scientific spirit, spiritualism and religion are fast fading. We have to probe the cause. Our pursuit of spiritualism would be a lost labour, in case, our speculation and experience belie their existence. However, if we are convinced that spiritualism is the summum bonum of life and a concomitant of happiness and peace, we are supposed to strive for adding to its glory. It is my conviction that man is deprived of all that is worthy of cherishing by losing touch with his soul. It is this principle that lends stability to the rest of the values, in human life. But for it, life would be denied stability in respect of most of the values.

Jainism seeks its survival from spiritualism. In Jain epistemology soul finds the place of honour.

Knowledge is no more than an adjunct of soul. In Jain logic, again, it is the soul that enjoys the first priority. No proof can hold validity, independent of soul. In Jain metaphysics, the soul again occupies the prime place. Of the nine substances, the soul comes first. In ethical speculation, again, soul wins the first place. The entire morality propounded by the Lord stems from the proposition of spiritual elevation.

Where the alpha and the omega of a system looks to soul, what is it but spiritualism. Jainism is essentially a system of spiritualism. From the initial practice of righteous vision to the ultimate deliverance, the emphasis is exclusively on spiritualism. This emphasis mitigates materialism. The underlying insistence on soul renders intellectualism modest. The scientific curiosity is also not allowed to become unrestrained on account of spiritual pursuit. The question is, has Jainism been able to preserve its original vitality?

In Jain discipline, there are learned beings, intrepid aspirants, restrained devotees and austere individuals but there seems to be an utter paucity of those devoted to meditation. In the absence of meditative temper, knowledge, spiritual pursuit, restraint and austerity remain acquired virtues and not inborn ones. When these virtues lack the spontaneity, they might well be yoked to exhibit miracles, they fall short of revealing their true refulgence. Today's environment calls for evolving an inner consciousness. What is religion, if not an inward-looking temper? The more extrovert you grow, the more are the chances of suffering distraction to your consciousness and the resultant dissipation of energies. To gather the consciousness is to collect your wits and the energies.

Lord Mahavira preached the message of gathering yourself into the inner core. There may be some who fear that it is another name for lethargy. What is lethargy is stultification of human energies. Concentration boosts up human energies instead of stinting these. Concentration is not a weapon to be wielded by the indolent. The more we suffer from attachment, the more we are subject to distractions and as a result our faculties lose their edge and versatility is thwarted.

The sages have delineated the apperception of the self as righteous knowledge, knowledge of the self as righteous vision and real self-absorption as righteous morality. The monks today seem to give a greater credence to acquired triad than the inborn one. They seem to put greater reliance on word than on the spirit behind them. They value pedantry more than the spontaneous experience. Truth is transcendental and language semantically hidebound. Words aim at expressing the truth and still they restrict the garth of the latter. That is the reason why the scriptures that were meant to solve the problems, create new ones.

In today's milieu the throng of problem is more scriptural and textual than spiritual. Disputation and polemics avowedly aim at spiritual progress. After an experience ranging to decades, we find the endeavour futile. The cause is that we have invoked scriptures while the latter have failed to invoke the soul. The scriptures can at best serve as polemical weapons, if they fail to become part and parcel of ourselves.

Once the soul is invoked, the weapons also become scriptures: to a soul in slumber, the scriptures are no more than weapons of war. Mahavira was the harbinger of spiritual awakening. His word is acknowledged as scripture, since it delineates the spiritual discipline and spiritual obligations. An action not enlivened by spiritual motivation is inert, since it is devoid of restraint and elevation. A spiritually enlivened action has the following prerequisites:

1. Texts be used for resolving intellectual problems and not for creating new ones.

2. The precious triad (righteous knowledge, vision and conduct) should be self-oriented and not pragmatically conceived.

3. Knowledge, aspiration, austerities and penances should be meditation-oriented rather than independent practices.

4. Solutions be devised in the contemporaneous context and not based on precedents.

Fulfilling these conditions, religious discipline can resuscitate its traditional glory and countenance the onslaught of a materialistic era.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAHAVIRA AND DEMOCRACY

Chronologically speaking, Mahavira is ancient. He was born on the thirteenth day of the first lunar month, two thousand five hundred years ago. From a pragmatic view, Mahavira is as fresh as ever. The obsolete is one which loses the capacity to offer solution. Mahavira's gospel amply retains that capacity today. That renders him as fresh as ever.

The era of that hoary tradition seems to recapitulate today, in our country. The Lord was born in an era signified by democracy. We are witnesses to the growing democratic tradition. The principles enunciated by the Lord vividly reflect the spirit of democracy. Those who are akin in spirit to democratic principles ought to embrace the principles of the Lord.

The first principle propounded by Mahavira was that of liberty. The rest of the principles seem to converge to it. The one who is devoid of the spirit of liberty will find the rest of his principles reduced to naught. Liberty is the prime fountain of all power. Coercive deterrence cannot form a valid basis for spiritualism. Identical is the case with democracy.

Spiritualism draws upon the power that inheres in the spirit and democracy draws upon the power inhering in the people. When an individual is fired with the urge to enjoy liberty, spiritualism comes to the fore: when a people is fired with a similar urge, democracy comes into being.

The next principle of the Lord was self-determination.

He taught us that it is against our sovereignty to leave our destiny in the hands of others. He preached that we are the creators of our own happiness and unhappiness. We are our own friend and we are our own foe. It is left to us to decide what we make of ourselves. It is a valuable principle in democratic thought. Where an individual ceases to enjoy the right of self-determination, his potential is thwarted. Dauntless capacity is needed to achieve development and it is the right of self-determination that breeds this capacity.

The third principle of Mahavira was self-restraint.

He pleaded that you must spare others from the compass of your restraint. You have to exercise your control over yourself *i. e.* your body, your speech and your mind. You have to rule your self by means of restraint, and austerity. To submit to another's control is to submit to a coercive evil.

Self-restraint alone can guarantee the success of a republic. The greater the reliance on external control, the feebler the chances for a democracy to flourish. The fullest glory of a democracy emerges when the citizens embrace self-restraint, voluntarily.

The fourth principle of Mahavira was relativity.

It implies equal opportunities to all. While we churn the curd, and draw one hand towards ourselves, the other is moved forward. Next we reverse the movement of the respective hands. This results in separating the cream.

While we walk, the two feet alternate in moving ahead and staying behind. It lends us movement.

This relativity is the essence of Jain logic of Syadvada. It functions as an excellent instrument for discovering and enunciating truth. This principle is the backbone of democratic thinking. When a handful of people monopolise all authority and offices, denying others all opportunity, a wide unrest occurs. Congress chief Kamaraj sought equilibrium by suggesting an exchange of positions between the officials and the party workers. Such a relative treatment can assuage partisanship in large measure. Even if there be a diversity of approach, such a relative perspective can obviate schisms.

Whatever was done by Mahavira was in the interest of human deliverance. Whatever was uttered by him was, again, in the interest of human deliverance. What is democracy, but an experiment in practical deliverance. That reveals Mahavira's word and deed as a potent force to lend us guidance.

India stands on cross-roads today. It seems to be stepping on the threshold between the present and the past. Each new step poses new problems and a solution is possible by devoting ourselves to retrospection and prospection. A fire that is extinguished can scare none. But the one that is throwing out flames scares everybody. So long as our country remained an insignificant war-power, none paid her any heed. However, our logistic planning has incited our neighbours with their suspicions. Admitted that defence-unpreparedness is as dangerous as antagonising the neighbours by inducing suspicions amongst them, a pondering over this knotty problem reminds one of the Lord's maxim—Fearlessness conduces to strength. Be fearless and induce the same feeling in others. When strength is nurtured by a feeling of fearlessness, suspicion finds no vantage ground. Those who have been your friends will never become foes, then. Nor would new foes be created. One who has comprehended the Lord's wisdom shall cease to be an aggressor. Protection of your self and your country is no aggression. However, Indian diplomats should energise non-aggression on the international plane and alleviate suspicions. Political parties should refrain from mudslinging and create mutual trust. That is the only way to mutual welfare. That will be the real tribute to Lord Mahavira.

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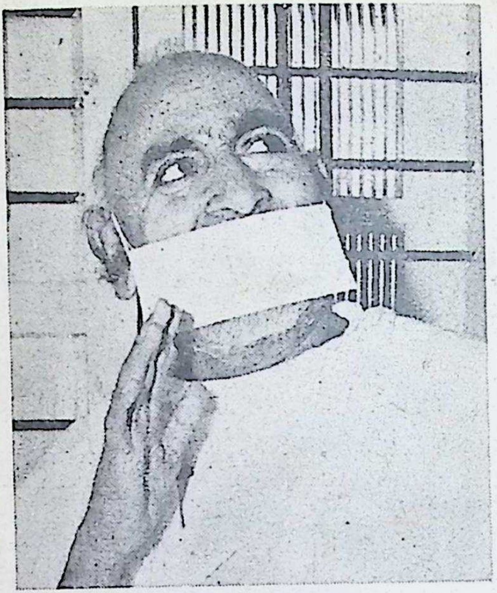
BY THE SAME AUTHOR

- Acharya Tulasi : His Life and Philosophy
- Acharya Bhikshu : The Man and His Philosophy
- Gravitation of Morality
- Life and Philosophy
- You are a Torrent of Boundless Energy
- Much in Little
- Ocean in Drops
- Wisdom of Mahavira
- Lord Mahavira



It was from the great Himalayas of Agamas that Acharya Bhikshu made the current of literature flow. Jayacharya, the fourth pontiff of Terapantha, widened its scope and Kalugani, the eighth pontiff, strengthened the banks of it by incessant efforts. Acharya Tulasi sponsor of Anuvrata movement, is trying to accentuate the velocity of the flow and thus make it reach each and every corner of the world. He has created both, the masterpieces of literature and the scholars. His own literary contribution has enriched Indian literature and has opened new floodgates of intelligence. This book is a streamlet which joins the big river and paves way for reconciliation. It is but a holy march towards unity from diversity. It aims that the lamp of one's own personality be kept shining on the lamp-stand of universality and enlighten the universal mind as a whole.